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CANADIAN VANISHING COMMUNITIES

HUNTERS AND GATHERERS OF THE WESTERN PLAINS

· WINIFRED FERRY ·



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VANISHING
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HUNTERS AND GATHERERS OF THE WESTERN PLAINS

· WINIFRED FERRY ·

GLC Publishers Limited

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Metropolitan Separate School Board, Toronto.

Photographs: Public Archives Canada and Jim O'Donohue

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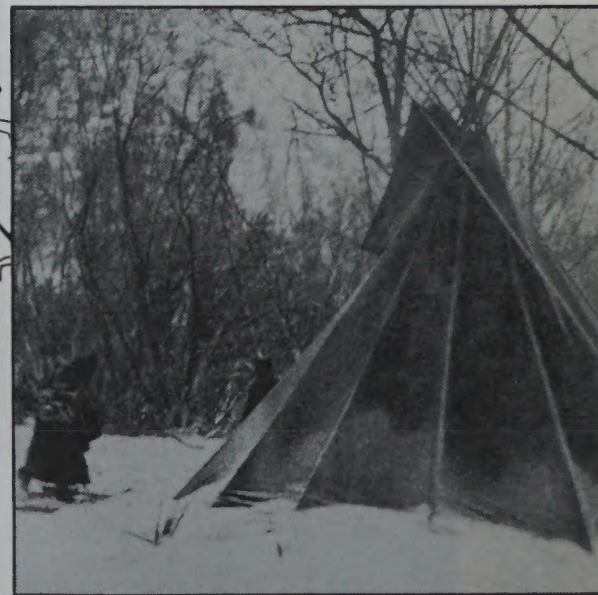
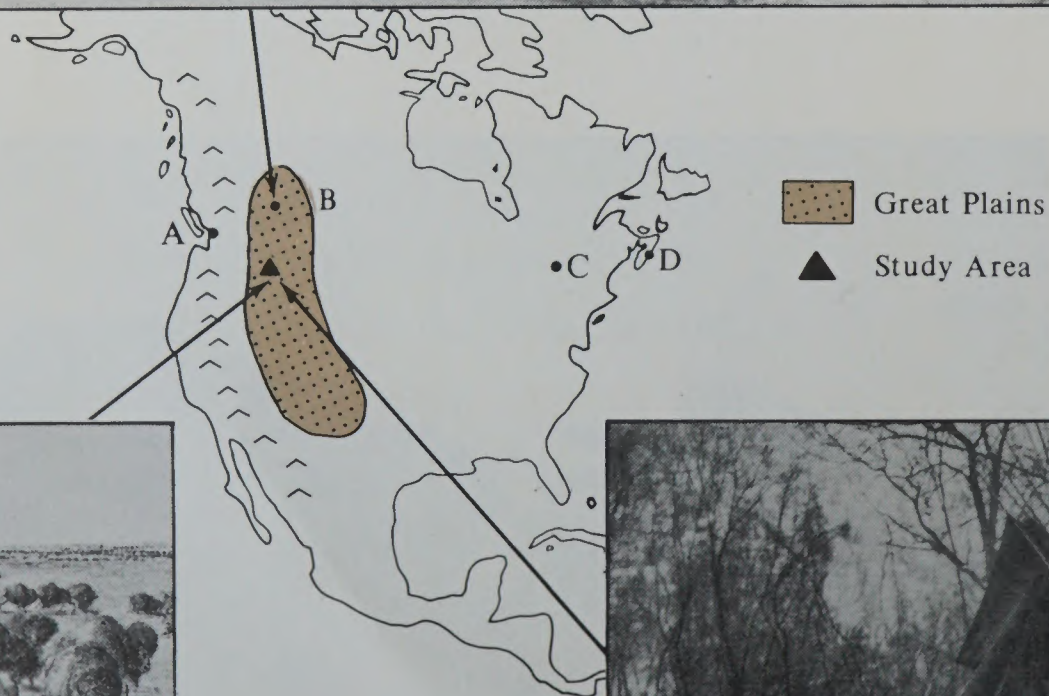
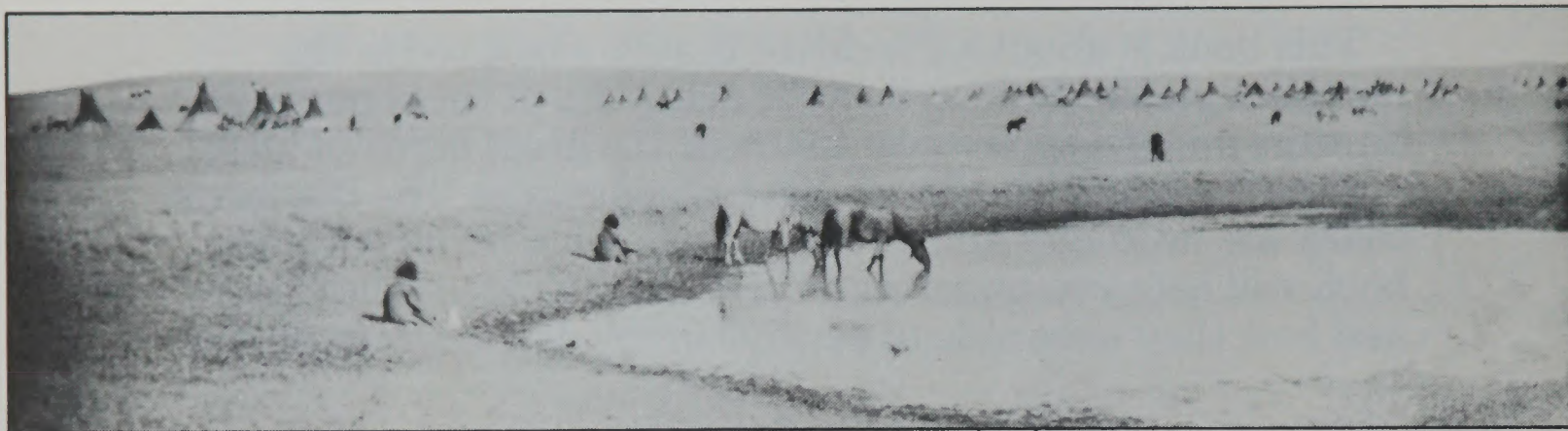


This book is about a Blackfeet family who lived in the northern plains. It describes the activities of these nomadic hunters and gatherers who followed the great herds of bison.

Now the huge bison herds have disappeared. The Blackfeet today are no longer able to live by following the bison. This book will help you understand how the Blackfeet once lived and how they were able to survive in the dry, western plains.



ACTIVITY 1



1. On a map of North America, print the name of:

- (a) three oceans
- (b) one gulf
- (c) one bay
- (d) the high mountains

Use a wall map or an atlas to help you.

2. (a) What information does the map show about the location of the Great Plains?

(b) What information do the pictures show about the Great Plains?

(c) Find another name for the Great Plains. It also begins with the letter P _ _ _ _ _ .

		Average Temperature			Yearly Total
City		January	July	Total days with frost	Rain and Snow
A	Vancouver	2°C	17°C	155	1,500 mm
B	Edmonton	-15°C	17°C	245	450 mm
C	Quebec	-12°C	19°C	230	1,090 mm
D	Halifax	-6°C	18°C	215	1,400 mm

3. (a) Which place on the chart is coldest in winter?

(b) Which place has the longest winter? (total days with frost).

(c) Which place is driest?

(d) Which city is located in the Great Plains? The letters on the map will help you.

4. (a) Why are some symbols in this chart shown in white and others in black?

(b) During which season does most of the moisture fall?
Why is this good?

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Total	
23	20	23	28	46	76	79	58	30	20	23	23	449 mm	<div> <div></div> <div></div> </div>
☼	☼	☼	☼	☼	☼	☼	☼	☼	☼	☼	☼		<div> <div></div> <div></div> </div>

Total rain and snow for Edmonton

5. Complete these two paragraphs in your notebook. Choose the correct words from the list to help you. Remember to add the correct punctuation.

blinding	sunny
deep	short
cool	severe
strong	warm

summers in the northern great plains are short the _____ season lasts from late may to early september the _____ pleasant days are followed by _____ nights the rain usually falls at night sometimes there are _____ thunderstorms

the _____ winters however are long and cold they are often harsh temperatures can quickly drop to -40°C with _____ winds and _____ blizzards the _____ snow covers the ground



ACTIVITY 2

1. It is early summer. There is much excitement in the camp. A scout has just rode in. He tells the chief that there is a herd of bison.

Chief Lone Eagle calls the hunters together. He tells them to leave for the hunt. He asks a special warrior group to keep order during the hunt. Wolf Plume is one of the warriors. He rides ahead to help keep the herd together. Wolf Plume's pony was trained to

gallop beside a bison running at full speed. This helps the hunter ride close to the animal. He can then shoot his arrows quickly.

Everyone in camp is busy preparing for the hunt. All except the young children have a job to do.

Describe how Wolf Plume and the other hunters catch bison. Use the picture to help you.



3. (a) Use this picture to describe another way of hunting bison.

(b) Why must everyone work together so that this kind of hunt will be successful?



The bison is the correct name for the North American buffalo. Bison belong to the cattle and goat family. Their dark brown fur is very coarse.

Bison live in herds. They eat the rich grasses of the plains. When the grass in one place has been eaten, they migrate to a new pasture. Bison usually walk very

slowly. But, they can run as fast as 70 km an hour for short distances.

Millions of these animals once lived on the Great Plains. Now, only a few are left. These are kept safe on reserves.



4. (a) How are Evening Star and the other women getting berries?

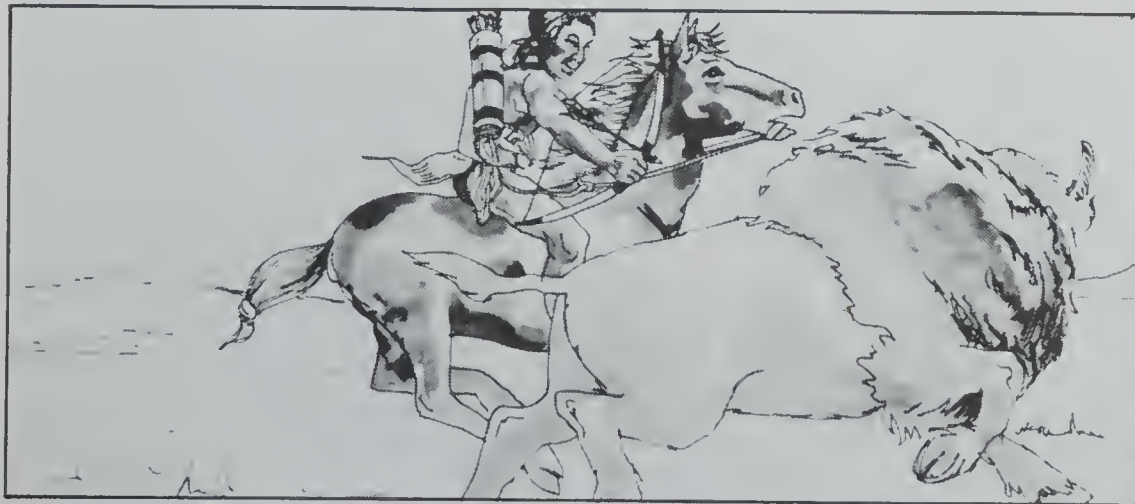


5. Evening Star and her family eat these foods:

rabbit	elk
Saskatoon berry	camas root
chokecherry	raspberry
prairie turnip	thimbleberry
gooseberry	cow parsnip
silverberry	bearberry

(a) Divide these foods into two lists, foods which are hunted; foods which are gathered.

(b) One important food is missing. Remember to add it to your list.



6. The size of the pictures in this chart shows which method of getting food is most important.

(a) Which method of getting food is most important?

(b) Which animal provides the most food?

ACTIVITY 3

1. Red Cloud is the son of Wolf Plume. Some day he will be a warrior like is father. He too, will hunt bison. But first he must help in other ways.

After the hunt is over, Red Cloud helps bring the bison meat to camp. He has made a travois of wooden poles. He loads it with meat. His



pony drags the travois back to camp.



At the camp, Red Cloud's grandmother and his sister, Evening Star, are busy cutting the meat into thin strips. Some of these strips will be dried by the sun.

- (a) Where does Morning Star hang the strips of meat so the sun can dry them. Use the picture on the opposite page to help you.
- (b) How is the meat smoked?

2. Morning Star's friend puts hot stones into a skin pot full of water. Once the water is boiling, she drops some pieces of meat into it. Red Cloud tastes some of the cooked meat. It is delicious! Everyone enjoys eating the tender meat.

- (a) How are the stones heated?
- (b) What are they used for?
- (c) What would happen if Evening Star's friend made a fire under the skin pot?

3. After the meat has dried, Evening Star takes it off the rack. Then, her grandmother pounds each piece. This makes the meat soft. The dried meat is called jerky. It is stored in skin bags. Jerky can be kept this way for many months. It can be cooked or eaten as it is.

- (a) What tool does Evening Star's grandmother use to pound the meat? The picture will help you.
- (b) Why does she pound the meat?
- (c) Why is it important to preserve some of the meat?
- (d) Name some ways you know to preserve meat.

4. Morning Star's grandmother also uses jerky to make pemmican.

Making pemmican is another way to preserve meat.



Here is one way to make pemmican, but there are no verbs in the instructions. Write this recipe in your notebook. Use the verbs from this list to complete the instructions. You may use some words twice.

Pound
Store
Mix
Pour
Roast

How to Make Pemmican

___ jerky over coals until the grease begins to show.
___ the roasted jerky on a flat rock with a wooden hammer.
___ dried, fresh choke-cherry pulp with the pounded jerky.
___ melted fat over mixture.
___ together well into a paste.
___ in a rawhide bag.

ACTIVITY 4

1. The hunt is successful. There is much meat in the camp again. There are also skins for making clothing.

Evening Star's grandmother, Winter Moon, knows how to make the skins soft.

Here is how Winter Moon tans a bison skin:

— Soak skin in water and ashes for several days;

— Remove and stretch the skin by staking it to the ground;

— Scrape the hair and fat from the skin with a bone scraper;

— Rub a mixture of brains and grease into the skin;

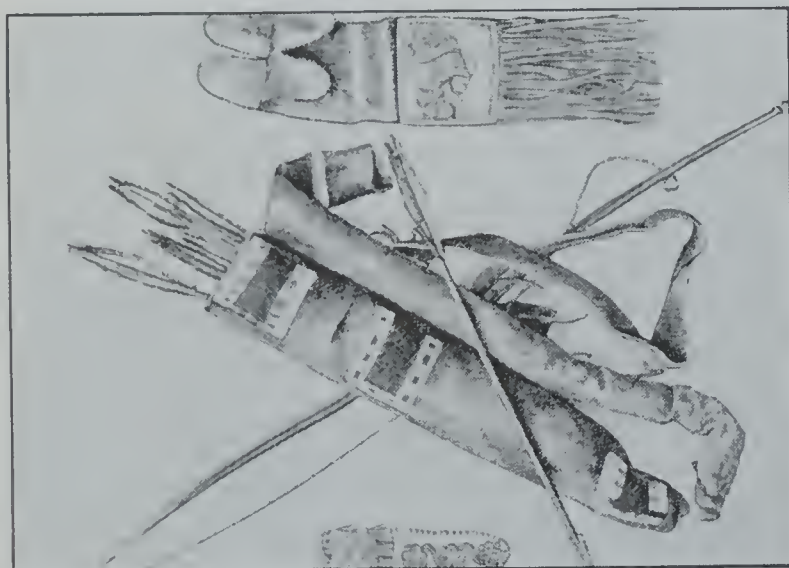
— Rub the skin across a thick stick until the skin becomes soft.

(a) What is tanning?

(b) What part of the tanning process does this picture show?



2. (a) Name the possessions in these pictures which are made from tanned hides.



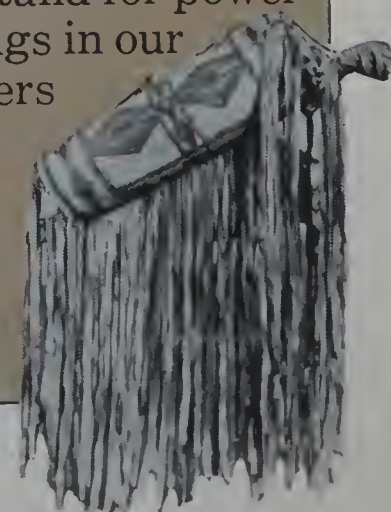
A Special Possession

The medicine bundle is a rawhide bag. Things such as bones, claws or feathers are kept inside this bag. Its owner believes that the bundle and its contents are special. They will bring wealth and good luck to him. Each thing in the bundle has magical charms. When one object is taken from the bundle, a special song is sung. Otherwise the object will lose its power.

Medicine bundles cost a lot. Only a wealthy person can afford one. A medicine bundle gives its owner more wealth and power.

(a) Only some things stand for power and wealth. What things in our society give their owners power and wealth?

(b) What is wealth?



3. These possessions are also made from parts of the bison:

Part of bison used	Name of Possession
sinew	thread, bow string
bone	scraper, paint brushes, sun dance altar
hoofs	rattles
horn	spoons, cups, ladles
stomach	water bucket
skin	blankets, shields, ropes, war clubs, knife sheaths, meat pounder, kettle, saddle, drums, moccasins, bridle, masks, horseshoes, saddlebag, berrybag

Name a possession used for:

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| (a) hunting food, | (d) eating, |
| (b) gathering food, | (e) a ceremony, |
| (c) cooking, | (f) clothing. |

ACTIVITY 5



1. This is Lone Eagle, the chief of the camp. Lone Eagle makes the important decisions about moving camp. He knows that everyone in the camp depends upon the buffalo. He knows that it is important to keep close to the buffalo herds.

Lone Eagle is a wealthy chief.

(a) What things in the picture show some of Lone Eagle's wealth?

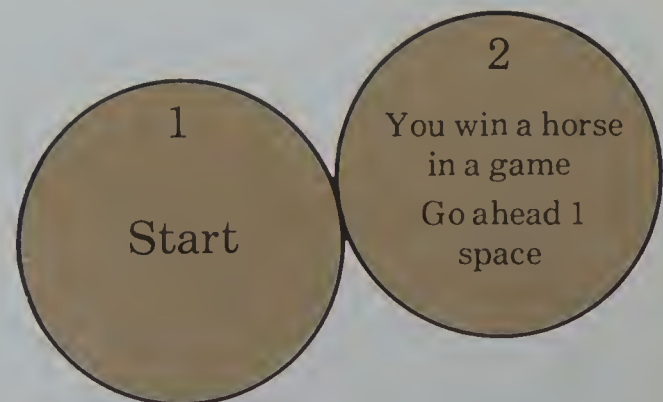
(b) Lone Eagle is also wealthy because he owns a large ____ of ____

Which words best complete the sentence?

group	bison
pack	horses
herd	dogs
flock	cattle

2. Why do you think the horse quickly became a sign of wealth to the Plains Hunters?

3. Play this game with a friend. Each player starts with five horses. Use a coin to count 'Heads' as two moves and 'Tails' as one move.



The player who finishes the game
with the most horses wins.



ACTIVITY 6

1. Red Cloud knows that he and his family will soon be moving camp. His father, Wolf Plume, is at a council meeting in the chief's lodge. For a long time all the men talk about when to move camp. At last they decide. The chief passes around the peace pipe. Then, everyone returns to their tents to prepare for the move.

Here are some reasons for moving camp. Which two reasons, do you think, are most important?

- (a) There is not enough grass for the horses.
- (b) There is not enough drinking water.
- (c) There is no more firewood.
- (d) The herds of bison have moved and the hunting is poor.

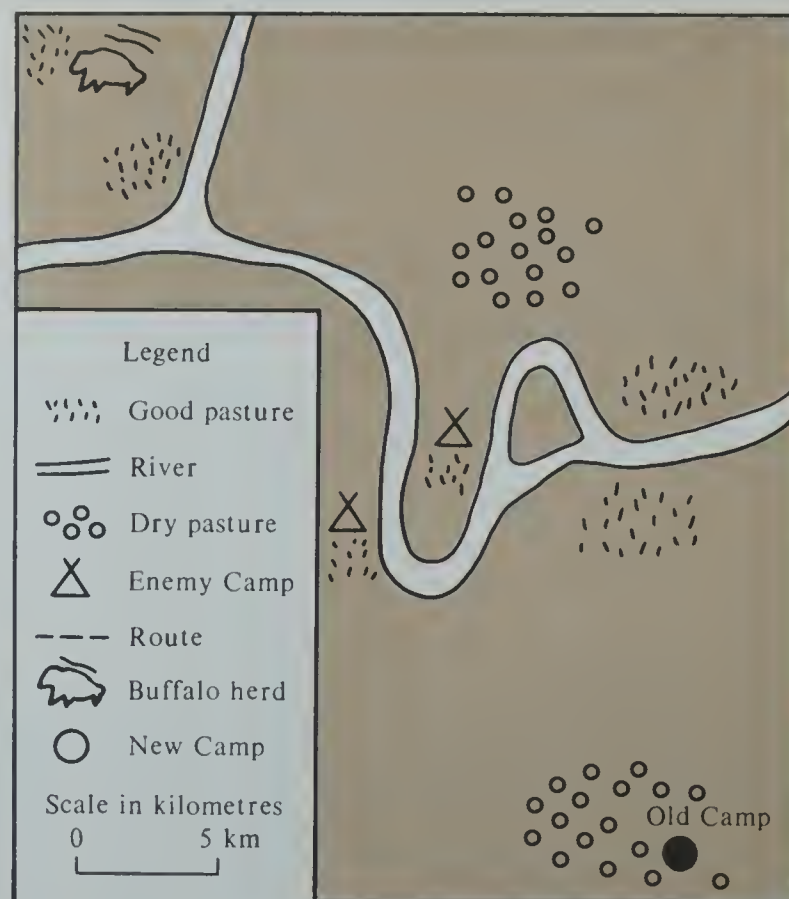
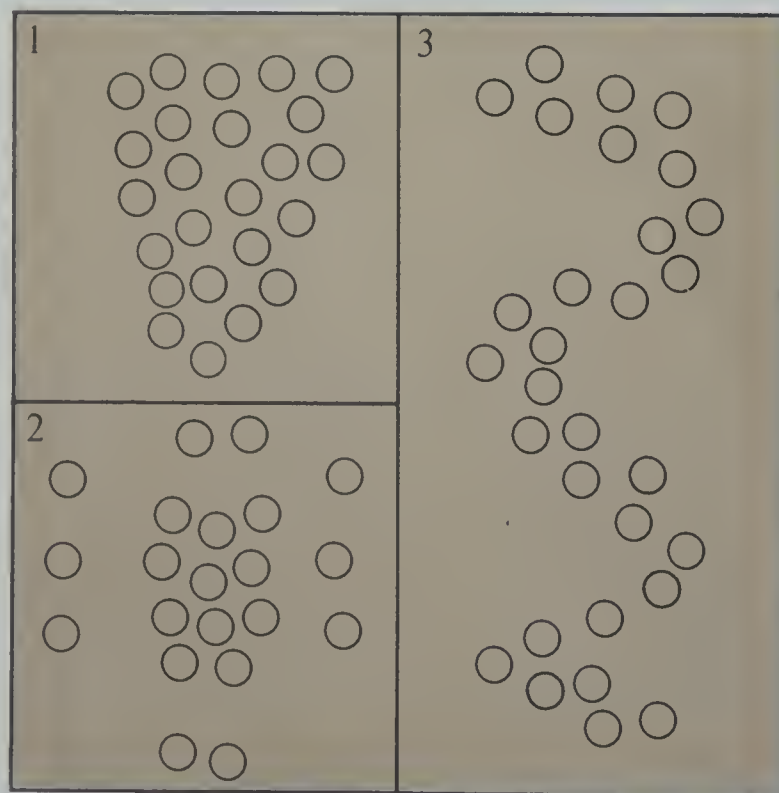
2. (a) What does this picture show?
(b) Give the picture a title.
(c) How will Red Cloud take his possessions to the new camp? Use the picture to help you.



3. (a) Pretend that you are travelling to a new camp with Red Cloud and his family. Write a story to describe what you might do and see during the first day of travel with the nomads. Use this picture to help you.
- (b) Find the meaning of the underlined word in a dictionary.



4. During the march to the new hunting grounds, the nomads travel in a line formation. The women take care of the possessions. The warriors carry only their weapons. They will protect the group if there is a surprise attack. Scouts ride two or three kilometres ahead. Other guards ride along the sides of the main group. A few guards ride at the end. (a) Which drawing shows this line formation of travelling?



5. Copy this map into your notebook. Include the map legend.
 (a) On your map mark the shortest and safest route from the old camp to a new camp near the bison herd. Use the map symbols in the legend to show the route and the new camp.
 (b) If the nomads travel about 20 km each day, in how many days would they reach the new camp?

ACTIVITY 7

1. After four days of travel across the plains, the nomads reach their new campsite. Nearby is plenty of grass for the horses. The bison herds are not far away. There is also a sheltered valley with a small river and some cottonwood trees.

Evening Star and Winter Moon put up their tepees near the river. First, they tie the four support poles together. Then, they stand the poles up to make a frame. They lay the rest of the poles up against the support poles. Winter Moon ties the bison-hide cover to the back pole. She unrolls the cover until each end reaches the doorway. Winter Moon then places the ends together with pins. After, Evening Star hammers wooden pegs through the cover and into the ground. These pegs hold the cover down. In a few minutes the tepee is ready for use.

(a) What materials are used to build the tepee?

(b) Describe its shape and size.

(c) Why is the tepee easily put up?

The picture will help you.



2. (a) Draw a picture of a tepee in your notebook. Show these parts of the tepee on your drawing:

support poles

cover

smoke flaps

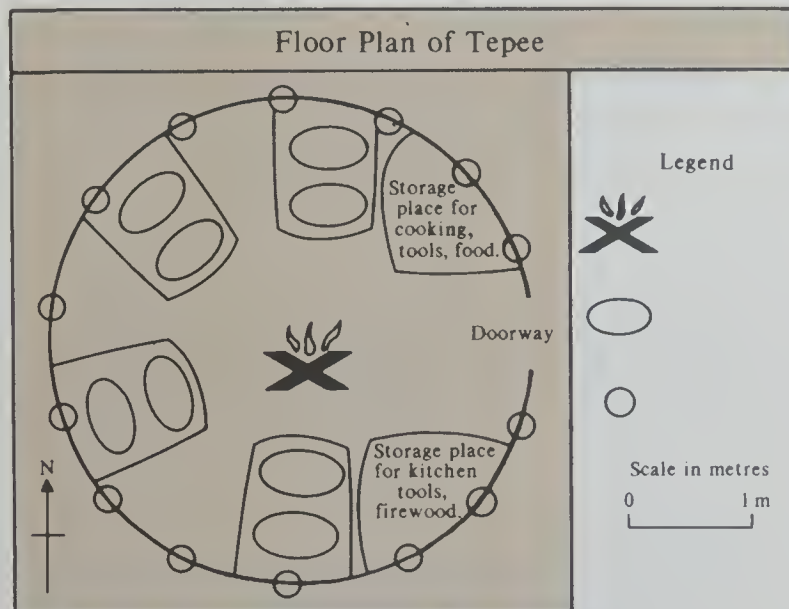
doorway

pegs

-
3. (a) What does this picture show? (b) What things are stored inside the tepee?



4. This is a floor plan of Winter Moon's tepee or lodge.



- Complete the legend in your notebook.
- How wide is the tepee?
- How many people might sleep in



the tepee?

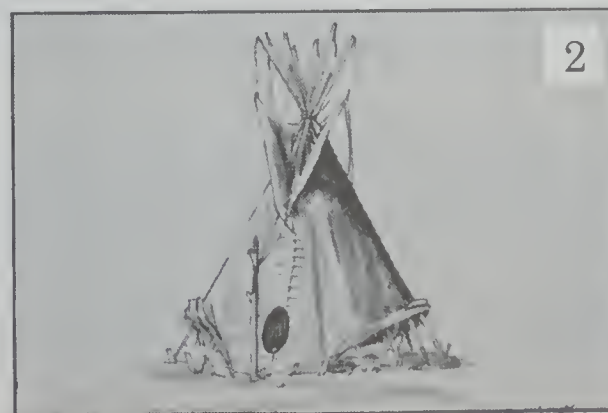
The legend will help you.

- Name some uses of the tepee. Use the legend for information.
 - Why is the fireplace located in the centre of the tepee?
 - Which direction does the doorway face?
 - In which ways is your home different from Winter Moon's tepee?



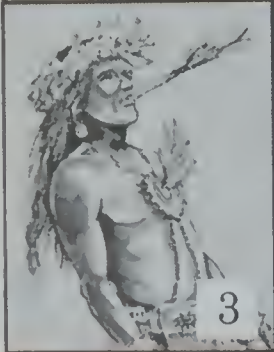



- Which picture shows a tepee in winter? How can you tell?
 - Which picture shows a tepee in summer? How can you tell?
 - The nomadic hunters of the Plains called the tepee the perfect home.

List some advantages of a tepee.

- Why would your home not be suitable for a nomadic family?



ACTIVITY 8

					
January	February	March	April	May	June
-15°C	-12°C	-5°C	4°C	11°C	14°C
					
July	August	September	October	November	December
17°C	16°C	10°C	5°C	-4°C	-11°C

1. (a) During which months are these activities done?

Moving to a new camp
Group bison hunt
Sun Dance

(b) Why do the nomads start to migrate in April?

The monthly temperatures will give you a clue.

(c) Why do the nomads stop migrating by November?

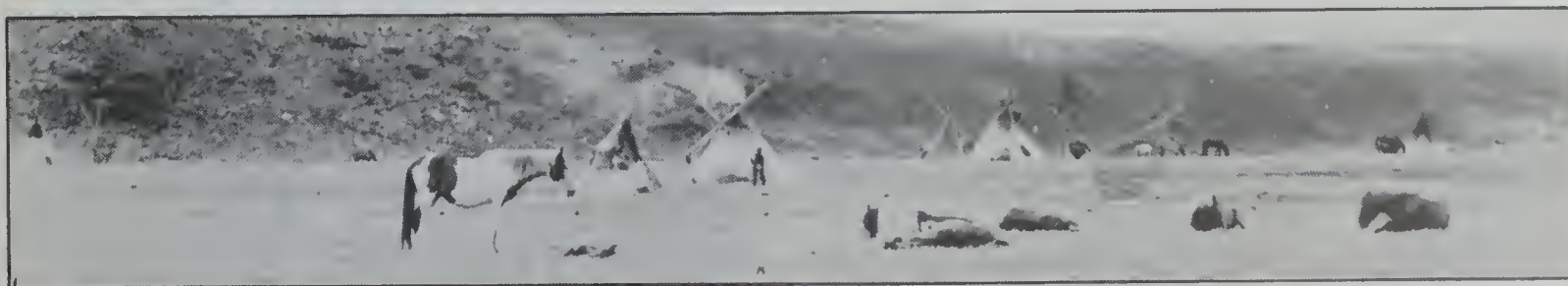
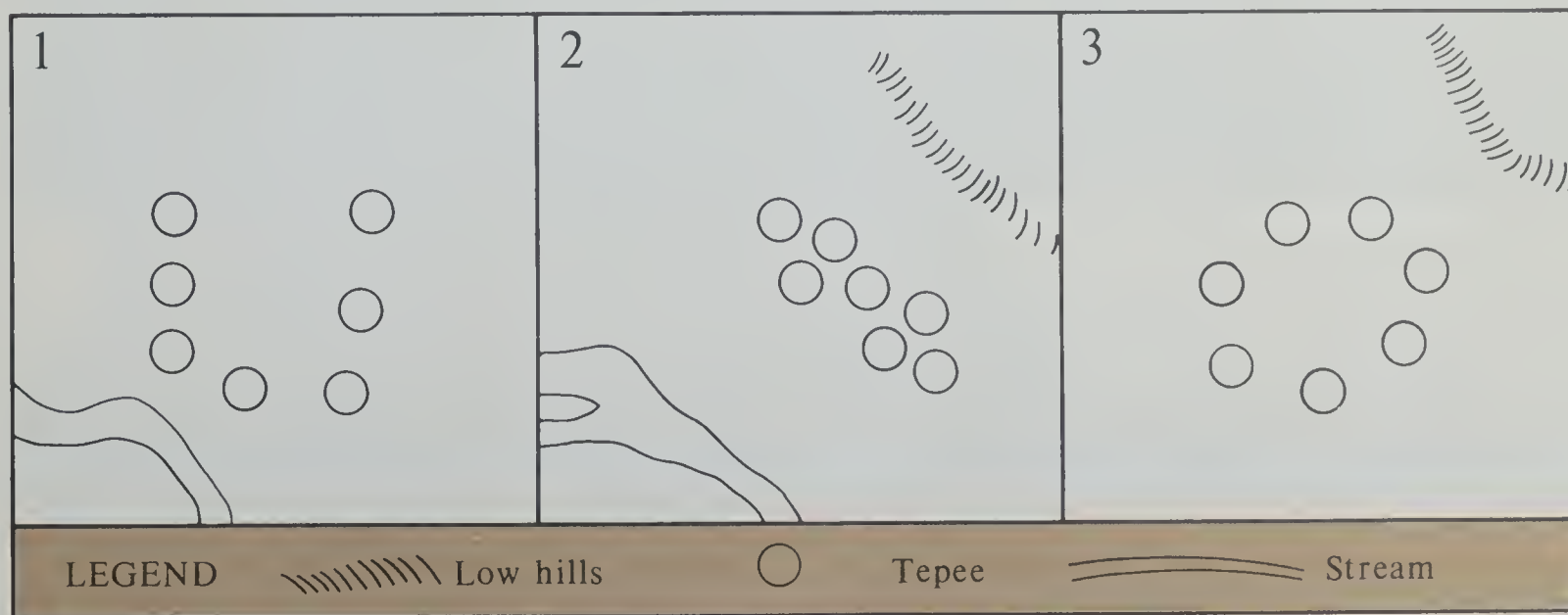
2. The nomads camp in a sheltered, wooded valley at the start of winter. They place their tepees close together because:

- (a) There is not much flat land,
- (b) They are better protected from the cold winds,
- (c) The people are afraid to live alone.

Which is most correct?

3. Which map shows how the tepees are arranged in winter? Picture 1 on the opposite page will help you.

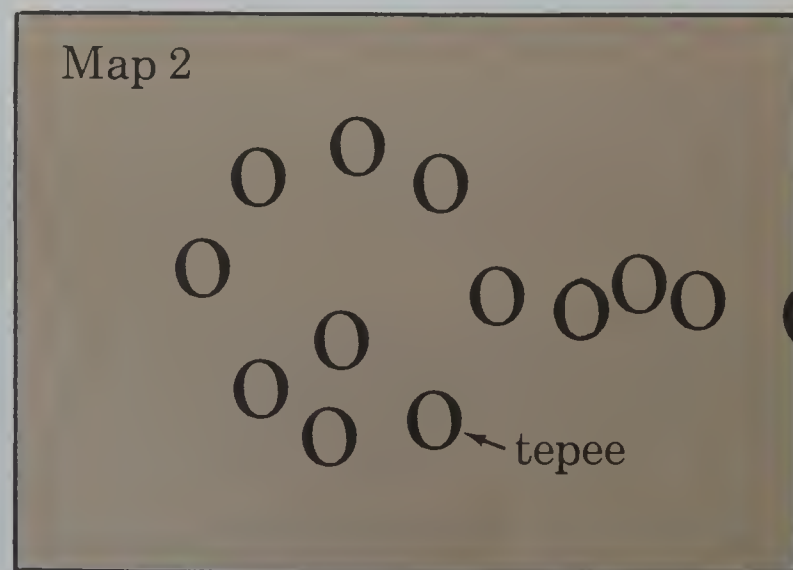
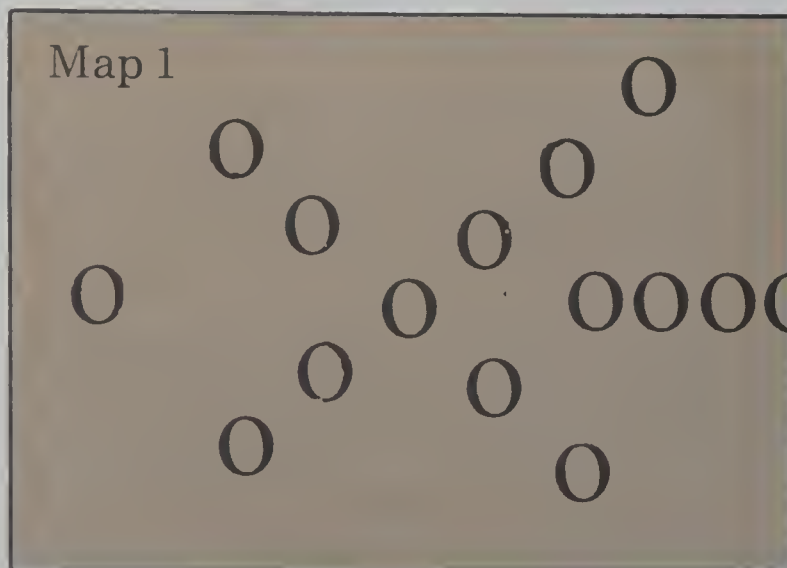
4. Why do the nomads camp on the open prairie during the summer? The chart on the opposite page will help you.





5. Which map shows how the tepees are arranged in summer? Use the

photograph to help you.



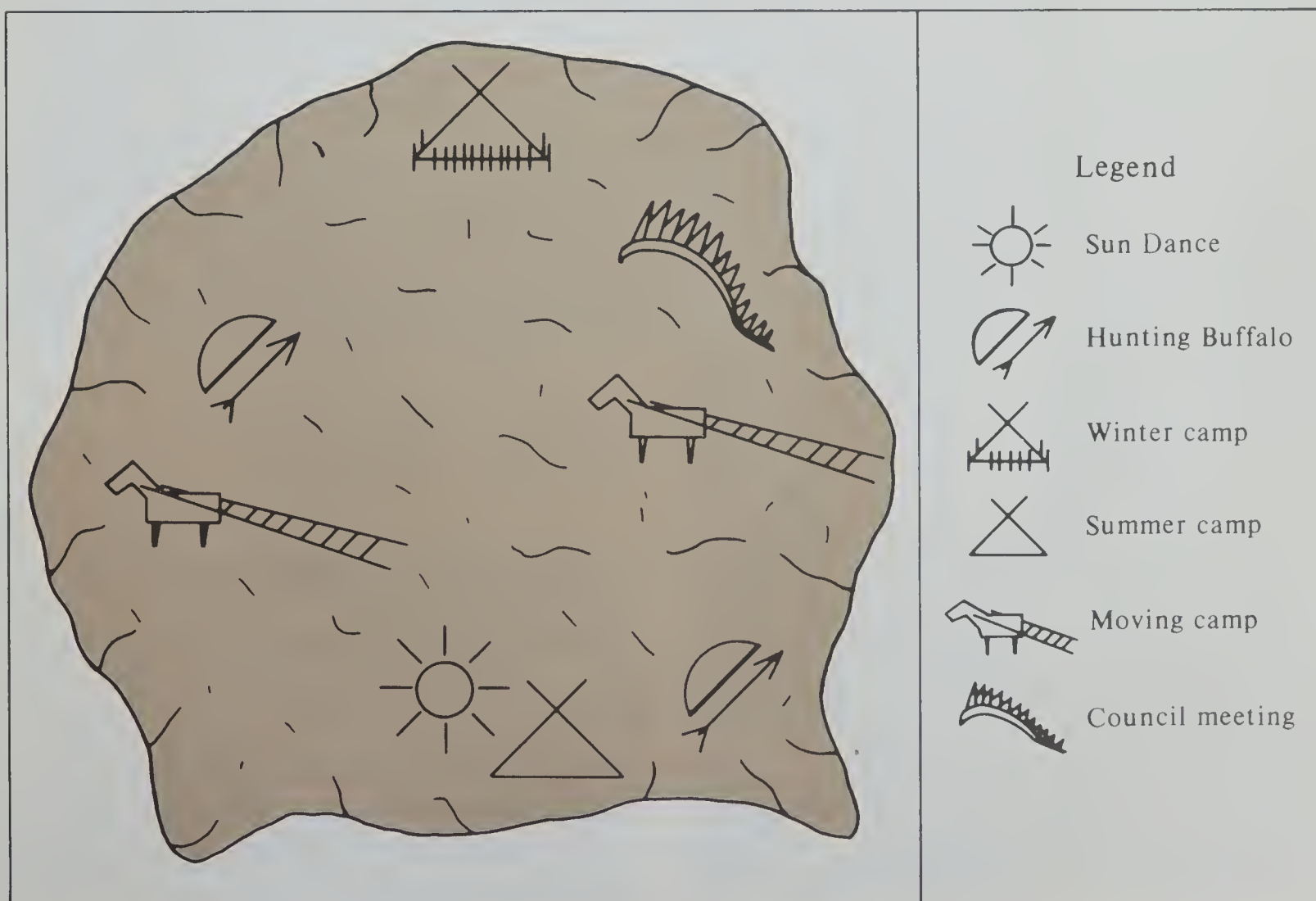
6. Wolf Plume painted this story on a bison hide.

Print these seasons on your picture in the correct place:

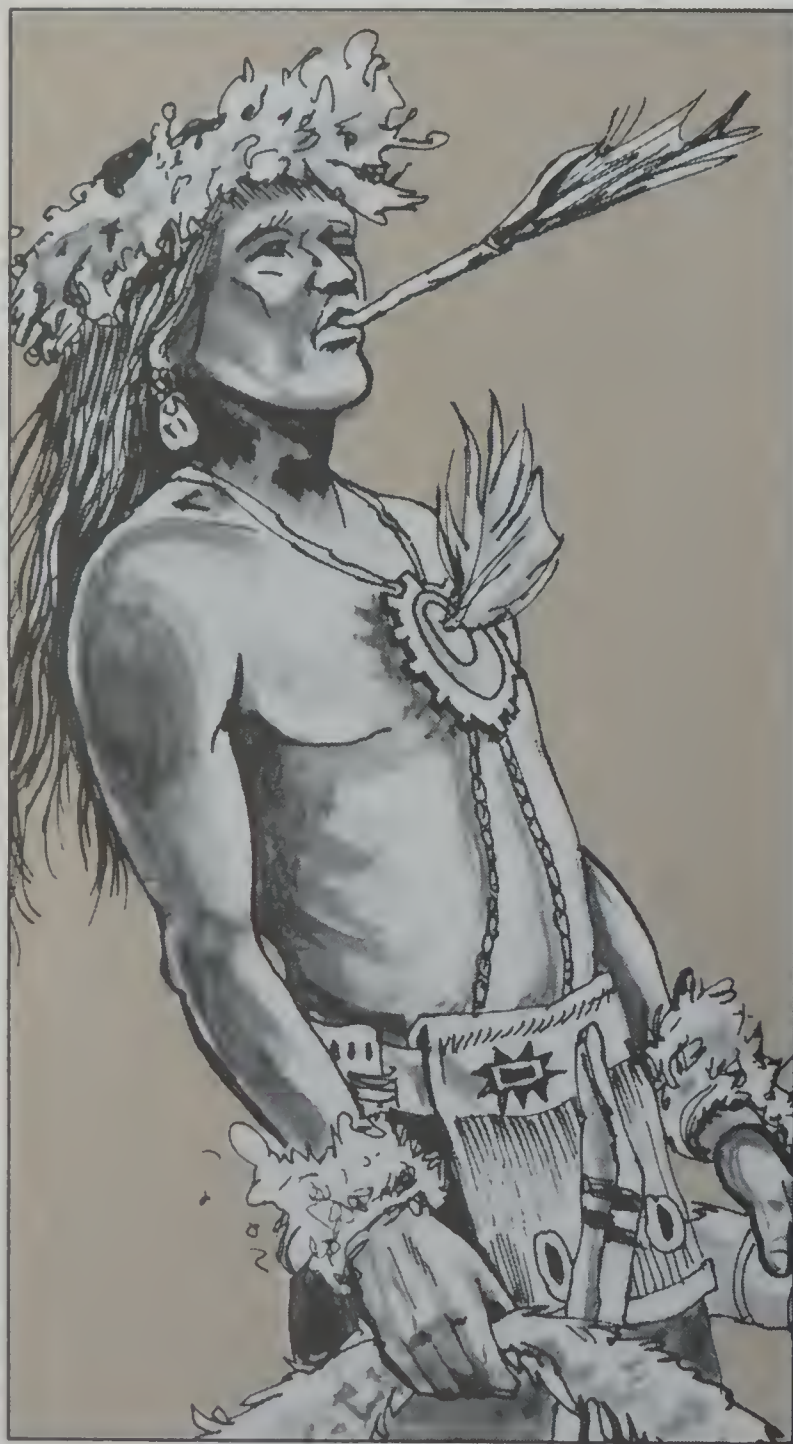
(a) What story does it tell?
The legend will help.

(b) Draw this picture in your notebook.

autumn
winter
spring
summer



ACTIVITY 9



1. Wolf Plume and some other men are dancing a special dance. They dance in a large lodge. They dance by swaying back and forth. They look into the sun. They also blow whistles and pray. They tell stories about their bravery in hunting and in war.

Each man smokes a sacred pipe. These dances and songs are not for fun. They are part of a sacred ceremony called the Sun Dance. It is held each year to honour the sun. The Sun Dance sometimes lasts almost ten days.

(a) Which part of the Sun Dance is Wolf Plume doing in this picture?

(b) At what time of the year is the Sun Dance held? The chart in Activity 8 will help you.

2. Winter Moon helps build the sacred dance lodge.

It is only used during the Sun Dance. Before the ceremony starts, Winter Moon and some other women choose where the lodge will be built. Wolf Plume and the other men cut willow poles for the lodge. Then, they build the frame.



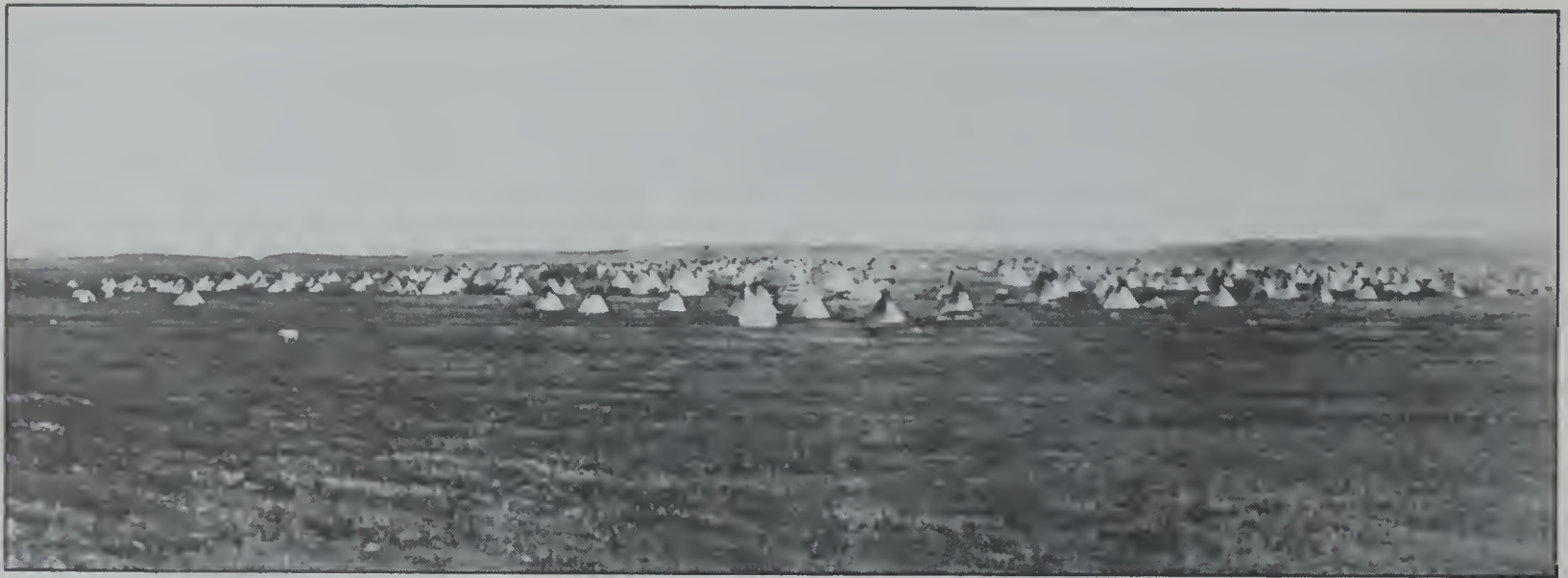
- (a) What must Wolf Plume and the other men do to finish the lodge in this picture?
- (b) What will they use to cover the frame? Use the picture to help you.
- (c) What shape is the lodge?
- (d) How is the dance lodge different from Winter Moon's tepee?

3. During the fall hunt the year before, Winter Moon helped prepare 100 dried bison tongues. She knew that these tongues would be passed

out to everyone during the Sun Dance ceremony. The tongues stand for the spirit of the bison.

On the day of the ceremony, Winter Moon and some other women are given sacred medicine bundles. They begin to dance and sing. They hold a piece of dried bison tongue to the sun and pray. They also place little pieces of meat on the ground for the earth spirit.

- (a) Draw a picture to show Winter Moon taking part in the Sun Dance.

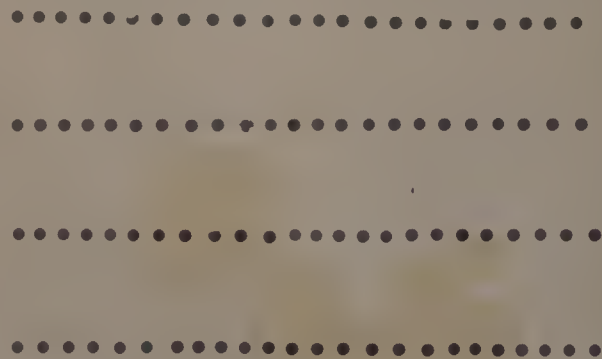


4. During the Sun Dance, many bands come together to take part in this important ceremony. This picture shows the Sun Dance camp.

(a) What word describes its size?

(b) Which map shows how the teepees are arranged?

Map 1



Map 2



ACTIVITY 10

How the Sun Dance Began:

One hot, cloudless night long ago, two sisters slept beside their tent. The elder awoke before dawn. She gazed at the morning star. She looked at the star and said, "I love the morning star. He is bright and beautiful and wise."

One day in autumn when the flowers had faded and the grass was yellow, the older sister, Little Deer, met a young man on the trail. He wore fine clothes of soft skins. He said to her, "I am the Morning Star. Come with me to the sky where my father the Sun lives. There we shall always be happy and never grow old."

So Little Deer went with Morning Star up to the sky. She lived with her husband in Star Land, and was very happy. After a while a son was born. She named him Star Boy.

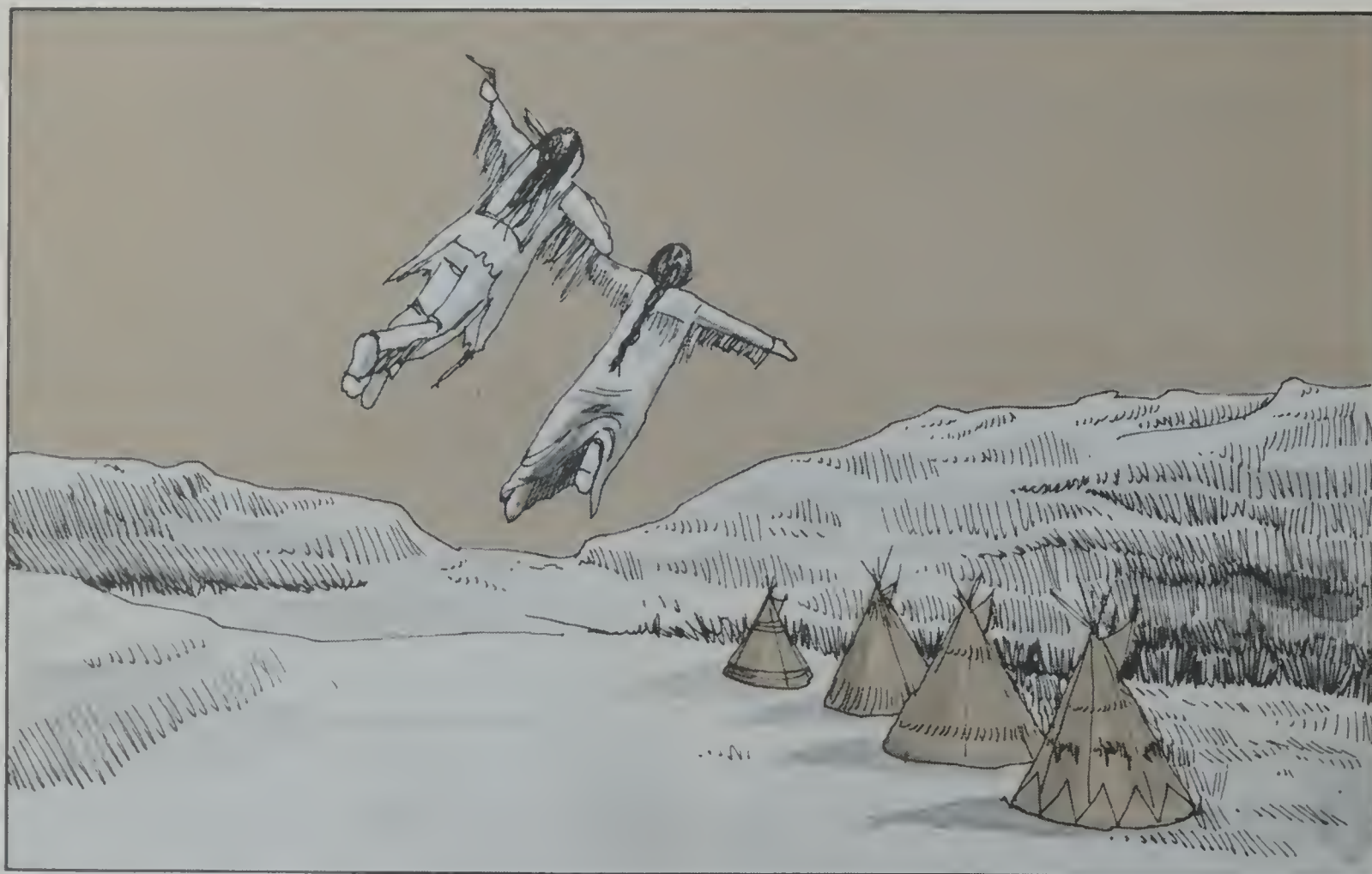
Near their tent in the sky grew a large turnip. The Moon, Morning Star's mother, said to Little Deer, "You may dig up any roots that grow

in the sky but you must not dig up this turnip." But one day Little Deer decided to dig up the turnip. As soon as she pulled it up she saw the earth below her through a hole. It was summer on the prairies. She saw women tanning skins and picking berries. Everyone looked so happy on earth. Little Deer became lonely and began to cry.

When she returned home, the Sun was very angry. "You have dug up the sacred turnip," he roared. "You must return to earth."

Everyone was sad to see her leave. Morning Star helped Little Deer back to earth through a hole in the sky.

It was a hot, still evening in midsummer. The people sitting outside their tents saw a bright light falling to earth. They rushed to the place where they saw the strange light fall. There they found a woman and a child. Little Deer's parents recognized her and took her home with Star Boy, her son.



But she was lonely. She wanted to go back to her home in the sky with Morning Star. But Morning Star could not take her back. After many years, she died.

Star Boy was left alone. He was very poor. He was also afraid to play with the other children because of his

strange scar. Because his mother had picked the sacred turnip, the sun had given her son a scar. The other boys laughed at him and called him scarface.

When Star Boy became a man he loved a beautiful woman. She told Star Boy that she would marry him

if he removed the scar from his face. An old Medicine Woman told Star Boy that only the Sun could remove his scar. So Star Boy decided to go to the home of the Sun.

Star Boy walked westward for many days and nights. At last, tired and hungry, he found the home of the Sun. Morning Star recognized his son. He took him to see the Sun and the Moon. The Sun told Star Boy that he would help him. He removed the scar from Star Boy's face. The Sun asked Star Boy to make a festival in his honour once a year. If he did, the Sun would heal the sick people on earth.

Star Boy returned to earth without his scar. He married the woman he loved. He taught his people the songs and the prayers of the Sun Dance. The Sun was pleased and took Star Boy and his wife up to the sky to live. Since that time, the hunters of the Plains hold a Sun Dance each year in midsummer. They dance and pray to thank the Sun for healing their sick and for protecting them during the

year. This was long ago promised to Star Boy by the Sun.

This kind of story is called a myth. It tells how the Sun Dance ceremony began.

Write a myth of your own to explain: Why the Moon Changes its Shape Each Month

OR

How the Clouds Became White.
You might like to choose another title instead.



ENRICHMENT

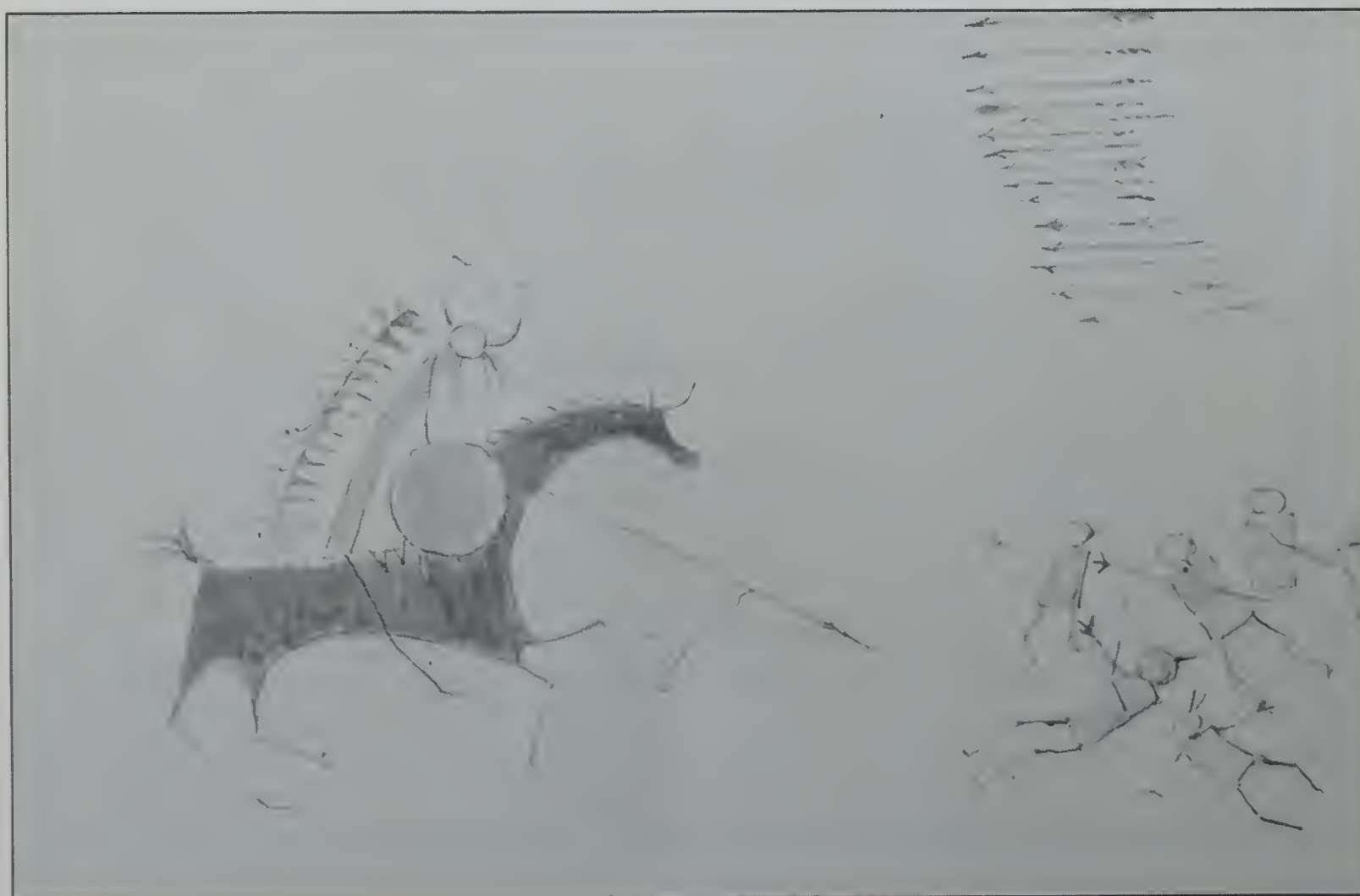
Chief Long Feather recorded a special event that happened to him a long time ago. He made this drawing on a bison hide.

(a) Where is Chief Long Feather in the drawing?

(b) What he is doing?

(c) What story did Chief Long Feather record on the bison skin?

(d) What things in this drawing show that Chief Long Feather is very brave?



To the Teacher:

The Great Plains, a vast grassland, with a climate characterized by winter temperature extremes and blizzards, summer drought and dust storms, supported the Blackfeet. Their adaptation to this harsh environment was based upon a hunting and gathering subsistence.

This booklet examines the Blackfeet during the mid-nineteenth century when their cultural development was at its peak. Data used to compile this booklet was derived from anthropological documents and early settlers' reports. Contact with more technologically-advanced societies is illustrated in some of the photographic material contained within. This book, however, focuses on how a simple community adapted to a grassland environment rather than the impact of this contact.

Up until the late nineteenth century, enormous herds of bison roamed the Plains along migratory routes. They provided the Blackfeet with most of their dietary and material needs. Wild berries and roots only partially supplemented their diet. One source has cited over three hundred non-food uses of bison employed by the Blackfeet. These include clothing, weapons, shelter, cooking equipment and the like.

After the introduction of the horse, the Blackfeet hunted bison on horseback, using bows and arrows as their main weapons. The bison hunt was a well-organized, communal effort policed by members of a men's society. They prevented enthusiastic hunters from charging prematurely into the herd.

For much of the year, the Blackfeet camped in bands numbering from one hundred to three hundred members under the leadership of a band chief. The chief did not have absolute authority. Because his position and advice could be challenged at any time, his primary aim was to maintain the respect and support of his people; he usually accomplished this through gift-giving and elaborate feasts. The chief's decisions, revolving about moving camp, hunting and warfare, were made with the

assistance of the Council of Elders.

During summer, the bands congregated for the Sun Dance ceremony, occupying an encampment of well over one thousand people.

Because the Blackfeet were largely dependent on the migratory bison for food and raw materials, they were nomadic, moving camp as food supplies diminished. Winter moves, however, were only over short distances and were usually necessitated by the need to find pasture for their horses rather than themselves as surplus food from communal hunts was preserved for winter use.

The horse was the prized possession of every Blackfeet. It is estimated that one family required at least five horses to survive. The horse served not only in hunting and warfare but was the primary means of transportation when the camp moved. Because of its importance, the horse became a symbol of wealth and medium of exchange. Hence, the person with the most horses was undoubtedly the wealthiest.

This group of Hunters and Gatherers was selected for the Vanishing Communities series to help pupils better understand how a simply-organized community survived in a northern grassland. The ten activities have been designed to encourage both interpretive and analytical thinking. By working through the activities, the learner is directed towards basic understandings about a community whose way of life was based upon hunting and gathering. A variety of chart, map, pictorial, photographic and tabular data has been included to assist the pupil the learning process. The following are ten skill objectives leading to the understanding of the activities in this book:

Suggested reading for teachers:

Erdoes, R., *The Sun Dance People: Their Past and Present*. Knopf, 1972.

Powers, William K., *Indians of the Northern Plains*. Putnam, 1973.

Skill Objectives:

1. Translate information presented in map and chart form to locate the western plains and to describe their appearance and climatic characteristics.
2. Analyze pictures to compare two ways the nomads hunted the bison. Interpret a list and correct a chart to determine how the nomads obtained food.
3. Examine pictures to outline how the nomads preserved meat and made pemmican.
4. Use pictorial and print information to summarize the tanning process and to list the non-food uses of the bison.
5. Identify from a picture and text the indicators of wealth. Play a game which shows that horses were important to the nomads.
6. Interpret maps and pictures to generalize how and why the nomads moved camp.
7. Analyze the interior and exterior views of a tepee and its ground plan to better visualize its construction, size, shape, function and adaptability to the plains environment.
8. Relate their seasonal activities chart to the nomad's migration and settlement pattern.
9. Interpret text and pictures to describe the sacred dance lodge, the characteristics of the Sun Dance ceremony and the Sun Dance camp.
10. Read and summarize a myth in order to create a new myth.

Understandings:

1. The Great Plains are a vast, dry, temperate grassland region.
2. Hunting bison is the most important method of obtaining food and is usually a cooperative and communal effort. The nomads' diet is supplemented by gathered foods.
3. Surplus meat is preserved and stored for winter use.
4. Bison provide the raw materials for most of the nomads' possessions.
5. Wealth is determined by the number of horses owned.
6. Because of their dependence upon the bison for food and raw materials, the hunters and gatherers are nomadic; their movement regulated by the migration of the bison.
7. The communal shelters, made from bison hides, can be quickly erected and taken down. They can also be modified for weather changes.
8. The major activities of the nomads relate to the migration of bison and are influenced by the warm and cold seasons.
9. The Sun Dance is the most important annual ceremonial activity. Many bands camp together to participate in the ceremony.
10. The myth explains the reason for the Sun Dance and the Blackfeet personification of natural objects such as the sun.

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